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One might argue that Singapore’s innovative water resources planning and management have come about through sheer desperation. That may be the case, but Singapore’s policies also come from a clear national vision and coordinated efforts. As Singapore maps out its strategy for the next 50 years, what kind of plan does the HKSAR Government have to ensure a sustainable water system for the next generations?

### 4.4.1 Living on the Edge

“Living on the edge” refers to both the increase of coastal inhabitants in the world and the pressing environmental issues associated with it, especially on water systems as a whole.

**Population density in coastal areas is expected to increase**

**By 2025, as much as 75 per cent of the global population will live in the coastal fringes**

#### **Coastal World**

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), approximately 3.4 billion people – over half of the world’s population – live in coastal areas, which adds up to only five per cent of inhabited land. By 2025, as much as 75 per cent of the global population will live in the coastal fringes, with the majority living in vast watersheds that drain to the coast. High population concentration in coastal areas can be seen in Southeast Asia and West Africa. Currently, of the 33 largest megacities across the globe, 22 are located in coastal areas, while rapid population growth is also expected in many mid-sized urban centres of coastal areas.<sup>274</sup>

#### **Coastal China**

Similarly, coastal cities in China attract large populations to a compact land area. Guangdong Province is home to nearly 8 per cent of China’s national population, over half of which lives in coastal areas. The PRD, of which Hong Kong is the appendix, is primarily coastal (Table 15). The Sixth National Population Census indicated that the pattern of inland populations moving to coastal areas will continue, especially in the south.<sup>275</sup>

**Coastal China is moving in a similar direction, especially Guangdong**

**Table 15: Population and Coastal Cities of China (2010)<sup>276</sup>**

	Number of cities		Total population (billion)	
	Coastal	Total	Coastal	Total
Pearl River Delta	8 <sup>277</sup>	9 <sup>278</sup>	0.028 <sup>279</sup>	0.032 <sup>280</sup>
Guangdong Province	14 <sup>281</sup>	22 <sup>282</sup>	0.058 <sup>283</sup>	0.107 <sup>284</sup>
China	53 <sup>285</sup>	657 <sup>286</sup>	0.243 <sup>287</sup>	1.37 <sup>288</sup>

### Water Challenges in Coastal Regions

Rapid urbanisation imposes significant burden on fresh water and seawater systems worldwide

Water scarcity and lack of sanitation continue to be worldwide issues that are in many ways interlinked. Toilet-flushing is the key element of modern sanitation systems, especially in cities. Rapid urbanisation in coastal regions has created and will continue to impose a tremendous burden on both the fresh water and seawater systems. Toilets alone will strain the systems as flushing water usually represents 20-30 per cent of domestic water demand; and up to 70 per cent of water demand in commercial buildings.<sup>289</sup>

China urgently needs novel solutions to combat water pollution and proper waste disposal including sludge

In China, water scarcity is a long-standing problem worsening due to climate change and pollution. Problems emerge from river basins, are translated to the coastal regions, and then progress to the sea. Over the past 20 years, mainstream water flows have declined by 41 per cent in the Hai River Basin and 15 per cent in the Yellow River and Huai River Basins.<sup>290</sup> This has significantly reduced the loading capacity and natural purification ability of the waters and, in turn, worsened water pollution problems. To improve water quality, China has been constructing a large number of sewage treatment plants. The operation of sewage treatment plants generates a large amount of sludge, requiring treatment and disposal.

### 4.4.2 Challenges and Opportunities

#### Global Challenges of Living on the Edge

The global coastal areas urgently need environmentally-friendly and economical solutions to deal with effluent and solid discharge

The world's coastal areas are not only using a tremendous amount of water, but are also discharging an enormous amount of wastewater (treated or untreated) directly into the sea, to the direct detriment of ocean ecosystems. Conventional sewage treatment processes produce large quantities of waste sludge, and current sludge-minimisation, treatment and disposal technologies are unsustainable<sup>291</sup>. More economic and environmentally-friendly solutions are urgently needed.

**Hong Kong is in a unique position to make major contributions to the novel solutions**

## **Opportunities for Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is part of the problem, but is also in a position to contribute to the solution. Increasing water self-reliance is the general trend for cities and regions worldwide due to the threat of climate change and resource shortages. Hong Kong is no exception and it must do everything in its power to move in this direction. For example:

- Under “One Country, Two Systems” and while the Dongjiang’s water is still flowing and available, Hong Kong can take bold actions to raise the city’s water self-reliance. This can be done through integrated solutions with a holistic approach.
- Hong Kong should become an example of a “knowledge centre”, for coastal China, especially as it has pioneered systems such as the dual-water supply system, sewerage and storm-water separation, seawater toilet flushing, innovative waterworks in the sea and other new technologies, in order to move towards a complete solutions to food, water, energy and sanitation.<sup>292</sup>
- Hong Kong was one of the earliest cities in China to adopt a modern drainage system, separating sewage and storm-water over 100 years ago. This practice is now required by the Chinese government to prevent urban floods, combat epidemics and facilitate drainage management.<sup>293</sup>
- Although the potential of a rainwater harvesting system has yet to be explored, Hong Kong can be very helpful in providing Mainland China with practical ways to achieve this, especially in fellow coastal cities.

### **4.4.3 Potential for Hong Kong’s Water Economics: China’s Water Technology Hub?**

A potential market niche for Hong Kong in the water economy lies in alternative water-resources solutions and water treatments.

#### **The World Water Market Trend**

##### ***a) Alternative Water Resources***

Reused water (either reclaimed or grey-water reuse) is increasingly considered a sustainable supply of water for some uses.<sup>294</sup> Desalinated seawater is another widely-accepted alternative water source for potable purposes. However, the direct use of seawater as well as an integrated system containing

**Integrated fresh water, grey water and seawater systems have potential**

fresh water, grey water and seawater are being developed, and have potential in coastal regions.<sup>295</sup>

#### **b) Water Treatment**

**China and India will lead fast market growth in the water treatment sector**

Global demand for water treatment technology and service products was projected to increase by 5.7 per cent per year reaching US\$59 billion in 2013, well above the rate of economic growth in almost every region. China and India will register the fastest growth in the next few years.<sup>296</sup>

According to two recent market reports cited by *WaterWorld Magazine*, the marketplace for water treatment is evolving, with smaller players filling local needs as the influence of larger, global companies wanes.<sup>297</sup>

### **The China Water Market Trend**

#### **a) Alternative Water Resources**

**The newly released national policy made the market for alternative water resources clear and sizable**

The newly released national “Urban Drainage and Wastewater Treatment Regulations 《城鎮排水與污水處理條例》” will be effective from 1 January 2014. The regulations call for sewage and storm-water separation in newly built areas; emphasise urban wastewater treatment in the context of resource recycling and pollution improvement, and demands that all reclaimed water be included in total water resources allocation schemes.<sup>298</sup> Many cities have already set their water reuse targets. The market potential for investment is clearly sizable.<sup>299</sup>

#### **b) Water Treatment**

**Despite increasing wastewater treatment, sludge remains problematic and requires urgent handling**

In the past seven years, China’s investment in wastewater treatment alone accounted for more than RMB500 billion (about US\$81.5 billion) and has increased urban wastewater treatment capacity to cover 70 per cent of its total wastewater emissions. However, at least 80 per cent of the resulting sludge is neither treated, nor properly managed. This has caused secondary pollution, damage to the environment, and food safety concerns.<sup>300</sup>

**China’s water treatment and reuse market is a low hanging fruit for the rest of the world**

The world has its eyes on China’s enormous water treatment and reuse market. The Asian Development Bank recently announced that it will support China’s efforts to improve its wastewater management and reuse with a US\$240 million private sector loan package<sup>301</sup>. Singapore entered this market in 2006 and China is now its second largest market in this area<sup>302</sup>.

**Hong Kong's innovative solutions and connection to China place it in a position to transform into China's water hub**

Hong Kong is obligated to help, and in a position to do so. Compared with other investors, it has deeper roots in China and its entrepreneurship has developed side by side with Mainland reform. Shared culture and economic bindings enable better understanding and allow for tailor-made approaches to finding local solutions for water management problems. In short, Hong Kong has a golden opportunity to help the country while helping itself via an integrated water solution. In doing so, it can turn Hong Kong into China's water hub.

## **4.5 Policy Recommendations**

### **4.5.1 Put Water Back on the Policy Agenda**

**Hong Kong is running out of time for a long-term water strategy that closes the water loop**

The HKSAR Government clearly needs to focus more on water policy, and address the issue proactively and holistically with a long-term view. Waterworks projects can take decades from planning to operation. Also, Hong Kong needs an improved total water management strategy that closes the water loop, increases water self-reliance and is sustainable for future generations, should the territory be faced with extreme conditions.

### **4.5.2 Envision Water Solutions to Envision Hong Kong beyond 2047**

**Hong Kong needs to look beyond 2047 to instil long-term vision and drive progress**

The HKSAR Government must start to reset its mind-set to look beyond 2047. It should do this by encouraging the whole society to envision all the pathways of Hong Kong beyond "One Country, Two Systems" and look down the "water road" that can take us there. Looking at vital issues such as water can help to instil long-term vision, a sense of mission and the society's commitment to drive progress across the board.

### **4.5.3 Set an Integrated Management Mechanism to Close the Water Loop**

**Consider integrating all water handling departments and repositioning DSD as an alternative resources department**

The HKSAR Government should consider integrating all departments that handle water matters into one agency. This will help close the water loop in terms of supply and drainage resource management and control costs from a total lifecycle perspective. Even before this happens, the HKSAR Government should consider repositioning the DSD as an alternative water resources manager. This would be helpful in changing "waste-and threat-response"-oriented thinking into a more resource-

appreciating mind-set, and eventually contribute to a holistic water solution for Hong Kong and its neighbours.

#### 4.5.4 Improve Local Water Management

**Fix Hong Kong's own water problems first**

Hong Kong needs to know its own water systems better in order to face the challenges ahead constructively and imaginatively. In regard to this, Civic Exchange's policy recommendations published in the previous water policy research reports, *Liquid Assets II, III and IV*, stand valid and are attached in Appendix 2.

#### 4.5.5 Capitalise on Hong Kong's Characteristic Seawater Solutions

**Accelerate development of innovations from lab to market to capitalise on Hong Kong's lead in seawater solutions**

The HKSAR Government should urge the ITC to accelerate the development of innovations from laboratory to market. Specifically, the HKSAR Government and ITC can establish a task force to study how to provide policy, financial and talent support to promote and capitalise on Hong Kong's unique lead in seawater solutions. Hong Kong should strive to become the Water Technology & Innovation Hub of China.

#### 4.5.6 Be Ready to Offer Wastewater Solutions

**Hong Kong has R&D, policy platform and hands-on expertise in wastewater treatment that is ready to assist coastal China**

Hong Kong's recognised expertise in wastewater treatment R&D and in operating systems right across the urban water cycle<sup>303</sup> form a solid foundation from laboratory to market:

- The 2008 joint "Cleaner Production Partnership Programme"<sup>304</sup> between Hong Kong and Guangdong has already identified "Reducing and Controlling Effluent Discharge" as one of its key objectives;
- The Cleaner Production Partnership Programme (CPPP) has established a mechanism between the HKSAR and Guangdong Governments to work closely to address issues;
- The CPPP has been extended by two years to 31 March 2015, with additional funding of HK\$50 million.

**Hong Kong must grasp the opportunity to become China's water hub**

The Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) is the implementation agent for the CPPP. HKPC and the HKSAR Government should grasp this opportunity to enlarge a valuable market niche and press forward to establish Hong Kong as a "Water Knowledge Centre", a "Wastewater Treatment Training Base", and a "Water Technology Hub" of China.

If we do not do it, others will.

# Appendix 1

## Conversion Tables

Currency Conversion Table			
US\$	1	<—>	HK\$ 7.75
US\$	1	<—>	RM 3.22
US\$	1	<—>	S\$ 1.25
US\$	1	<—>	RMB 6.09
HK\$	1	<—>	RM 0.42
HK\$	1	<—>	RMB 0.79
HK\$	1	<—>	S\$ 0.16
S\$	1	<—>	RM 2.57

Water Volume Conversion Table		(metric vs imperial)
1 Cubic Metre	= 219.78	Gallons
1 Gallon	= 0.00455	Cubic Metres

# Appendix 2

**Policy Recommendations from** *Liquid Assets II – Industrial Relocation in Guangdong Province and Its Threats to Water Resources, Liquid Assets III – Dongjiang Overloaded, and Liquid Assets IV – Hong Kong’s Water Resources Management Under One Country, Two Systems:*

The HKSAR Government would be well advised to:

## **1. Synchronise with New Mainland Water Policy:**

On February 2012, the State Council promulgated the 'Opinion on Implementing a Strict Management System for Water Resources'.

This establishes limits on the development, use and protection of water resources. All local authorities are to “base their needs on water availability and act according to water availability”.

While the “One Country, Two Systems” principle guides Mainland-Hong Kong relations, Hong Kong should not ignore the new State Council policy because the water resources that supply Hong Kong are in the Mainland.

The PRD cities under the Dongjiang water allocation arrangements are governed by the new policy, thus Hong Kong should take it upon itself to observe the same policy.

Indeed, under the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, the new Hong Kong administration taking power on 1 July 2012 can put forward its own policy that reflects Mainland policy so that Mainland-Hong Kong policies on water resources can be appropriately synchronised.

## **2. Devise Long-Term Strategy before Water Renegotiations**

The current water supply agreement between Guangdong Province and Hong Kong will have to be renegotiated before expiration in 2014. This gives the CY Leung administration less than a year to devise and consult on a long-term water strategy that emphasises water conservation in Hong Kong, as well as collaborate with Guangdong Province and other stakeholders to protect and manage the water resources of not only the Dongjiang but also the whole Pearl River Basin.

Under this strategy, the HKSAR Government should consider:

- Promptly call for an independent audit of Hong Kong’s seawater toilet flushing system to conserve public funds and reduce waste;

- Perform a cross-agency comprehensive audit of the complete lifecycle cost of Hong Kong's water resources and establish an accounting mechanism for comprehensive water resources management;
- Re-examine its water pricing structure on the condition that the "user pays" principle is truly reflected and that the grassroots' interests will be protected;
- Hong Kong should be open to explore whether it can set a cap on water usage and progressively reduce it;
- Consult the public and set goals regarding the raising of Hong Kong's water self-reliance;
- Perform public outreach to help residents understand the source of their fresh water, the significance of Dongjiang water, and the challenges raised by the integrated development plans of the PRD. This would rally public opinion and facilitate changes in water use habits;
- Set a higher target to reduce leakage rate: Even though the WSD has already accelerated the original plan by five years to replace old water pipes by 2020, the leakage rate will still be 15 per cent. The US, Japan, France and Germany have leakage rates below 10 per cent. Tokyo's water leakage rate is only 3.3 per cent so Hong Kong can do better;
- Set comprehensive policies and mid- to long-term goals for water recycling. These policies and goals must consider important factors such as climate change, energy efficiency, reduction of emissions, poverty reduction and benefits to the elderly;
- Investigate alternatives for ensuring a 99 per cent reliability rate for Hong Kong's water supply;
- Investigate its responsibilities with respect to sharing water resources to carry out its obligations and uphold social justice under "One Water, Two Systems";
- Improve water efficiency and mandatory labelling: The entire public sector can lead by replacing water faucets and other water equipment to improve efficiency. Newly built public sector buildings, including housing, can be fitted with water efficiency equipment; and the Government can consider whether it would be appropriate to move from the current voluntary to mandatory water efficiency labelling; and
- Reuse water wherever possible: Programmes to harvest rain water, use grey water and recycle water should be enhanced and expanded.

## Appendix 3

The 3P Approach includes several initiatives to actively engage and involve the community, making the protection and conservation of water everyone's responsibility.

Year	Campaign	Action
2003	Water Efficient Homes	Encourage installation of water saving devices and conservation practices in homes
2004	Water Efficient Building Programme	Encourage building managers and owners to make their building's water efficient
2006	10 Litre Challenge	Encourage households to reduce water consumption by 10 litres a day
2006	Active Beautiful and Clean (ABC) Water	Clean, preserve and protect bodies of water
2007	Water Efficiency Fund	Provide business funding to implement water conservation measures
2008	10per cent Challenge	Encourage non-domestic consumers to reduce water consumption by 10 per cent monthly

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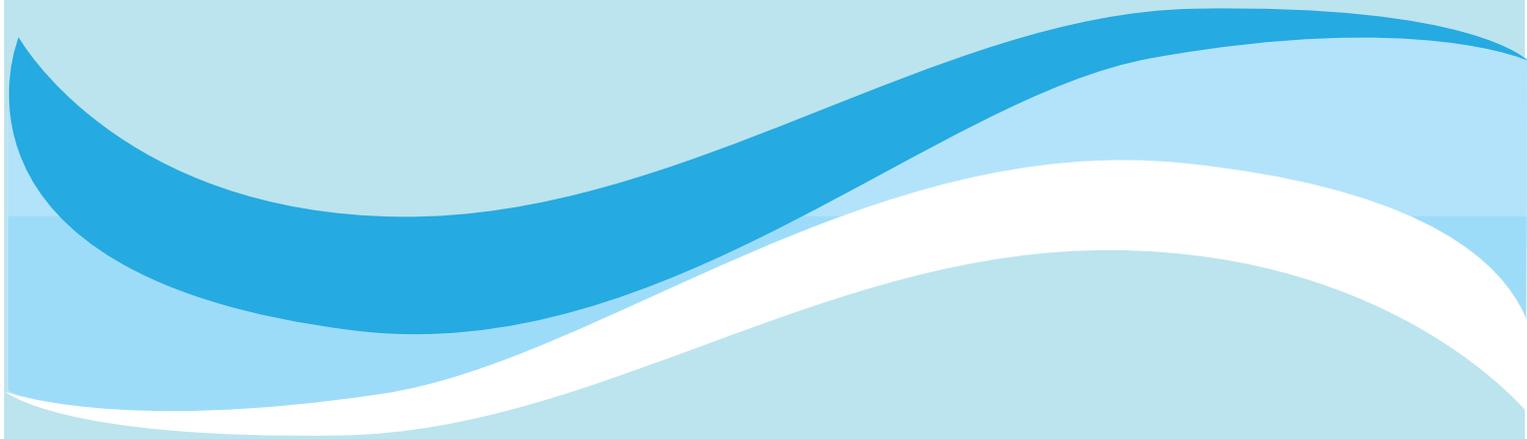
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